

# OSMP - Sombrero Marsh Restoration

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## Sombrero Marsh Restoration

My dreams for the future of the earth are world peace, less pollution and more habitats for the animals. The first two might be hard to accomplish but the third isn't. Sombrero Marsh taught me that it's important to help preserve open space. Doing little things like recycling can help save open Space. Sombrero Marsh is a wonderful habitat for animals and even helps prevent floods. --Maggie, Age 10

## Map to Sombrero Marsh

## Restoring a Natural Treasure

The plain slopes of bare, salt-crusted dirt clods belie the site's potential. To the untrained eye, there are few signs of the careful planning and hard work that have been lavished on the land. Yet Sombrero Marsh, an ancient and much abused natural wetland, is has been reborn. Native bulrushes and tall prairie grasses hide the naked contours; waterfowl feed and nest in the vegetation. Children's laughter graces the air.

Wetland Ecologist Don D'Amico has been overseeing the marsh's transformation from a neglected dump site to a Mecca for native plants and animals. During the winter of 2001 earthmoving machinery hauled away 55,000 cubic yards of fill material that had been deposited in the eastern part of the marsh. "We found some interesting stuff," D'Amico laughs. "There was part of a 1969 Ford Fairlane, some broken desks, lots of bricks and concrete &mdash; you name it." Once the material was gone, graders gently sloped and re-contoured the site to D'Amico's exacting specifications. Now the revegetation has begun: OSMP staff and volunteers planted thousands of native wetland and prairie plants and Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) constructed the board walk.

Photo - Some of the junk removed from the Sombrero Marsh site as a first step in its restoration.

When Boulder Valley School District sold the marsh to OSMP in 2000, it retained a one acre site in the northeast corner of the property to build a 4,800 square foot environmental education facility. The center, the result of a partnership between the school district, Thorne Ecological Institute, Go Colorado and OSMP, was finished in June 2001. It contains a small library, viewing and assembly areas and a laboratory for studying water and wetland soils. The school district is developing curricula in science and math with links to language arts to serve the district's students. The students will learn about the marsh outside as well as inside: a limited system of trails and boardwalks allow classes to visit a wildlife viewing blind and the restored portion of the marsh. The western portion of the wetland will remain off limits to the public and function as a wildlife sanctuary.

Photo - Sombrero Marsh is dry during most of the year. Spring rains, snow melt and rising ground water cause the marsh to fill gradually during the spring. By late summer, it is usually dry again.

Don D'Amico stresses that the restoration is a work in progress. "Vegetation won't cover the site in the first few years, especially while we are in a drought. We will have to aggressively control noxious weeds." Nevertheless, students now have an unparalleled opportunity to observe and participate in the gradual healing of one of Boulder's natural treasures.

Download the [Sombrero Marsh Site Management Plan](#) (2.13 MB). The plan was approved by the Open Space Board of Trustees on December 12, 2001.

Photos - Sombrero Marsh provides a place where many animals can breed and feed. Wetland vegetation must be able to tolerate the marsh's saline soil.